

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP NETWORK – MORE THAN AN ASPIRATION 'THROUGH THE SCHOOL GATES'

Hilary Berry, Val Godfrey and David Ling, Kate Bond and Maggie Farrar

1. INTRODUCTION

"Schools exist in a distinctive social context, which has a direct impact on what happens inside the school. School leadership should commit to engaging with the internal and external school community to secure equity and entitlement. Head teachers should collaborate with other schools in order to share expertise and bring positive benefit to their own and other schools. They should work collaboratively at both strategic and operational levels with parents and carers and across multiple agencies for the well-being of all children. Head teachers share responsibility for leadership of the wider educational system and should be aware that school improvement and community development are interdependent." Head teacher standard 6 - Strengthening Community¹

"The purpose of a school is to help a family educate a child" Don Edgar²

"It takes a village to educate a child" African proverb

In order to meet the expectations of the National Standards for Head teachers, and of the communities they serve, school leaders must not only provide leadership within their school but they must also build capacity for interdependent relationships and develop leadership capacity beyond the school gates. In this paper we outline how the National College for School Leadership's (NCSL) 'Community Leadership Network' has developed in response to local issues and national policy. Through a case study of Winsford Networked Learning Community we identify some of the problems and possibilities of distributing this leadership capacity across institutions and communities. We present some facilitation tools which have been used to develop the concept of community leadership within Winsford, and some of the learning from these experiences. Finally, we reflect on how important it is for individuals with leadership roles in schools, other agencies and the wider community, to have opportunities to develop a common language and discuss and agree what they understand by 'community', 'leadership' and 'community leadership'. This paper represents work in progress and is drawn from the work of many people within the community leadership strategy team and across the Winsford network, including the authors.

The NCSL community leadership strategy³, is supporting schools, community groups, and public sector agencies who wish to rethink their institutional role and relationship to the community and to each other. The Community Leadership Network is contributing to the strategy by making a collective commitment to create a new system for school - community leadership and learning, a system that is more responsive to the realities and interdependencies of communities in today's world and leads to demonstrably better outcomes for young people.

¹ Taken from the National Standards for Head teachers, published Oct 2004 by DfES

² Edgar, D (2001) *The Patchwork Nation*

³ see www.ncsl.org.uk/communityleadership

This network has arisen out of the growing understanding that the life chances of young people are affected by the effects of poverty, the families they are born into, the communities in which they grow up and the schools that they attend. In our communities where disadvantage is greatest, low educational outcomes and a widening gap between the highest and lowest achieving students are our greatest challenges.

“(educational) outcomes in deprived areas are worse than those in non-deprived areas, whether they are measured in terms of qualification, attendance, exclusions or ‘staying-on’ rates. Inner city areas in particular feature as having low outcomes”⁴

Members of the Community Leadership Network are aware that what happens beyond school has a significant effect on what happens in school and yet feel somewhat frustrated by the fact that traditionally education, social services, health, police and community groups have, in the main, operated in relative isolation. Each is trying to provide what they believe is best for children, but many are aware that children could benefit more from services which operate more collectively and interdependently, if only they were not so restricted by structures, systems, funding and policies.

The policy agenda has now shifted radically in response to this challenge. The Green Paper ‘Every Child Matters’⁵, and the follow up ‘Every Child Matters – next steps’⁶, propose to focus children’s services on schools and to foster multidisciplinary teams that address the needs of the whole child, the family and by extension, the community. ‘Extended schools’ and ‘full service schools’ provide opportunities for educational leaders to develop multi-agency collaboration promote a broader view of leadership and operate as agents of social change and community renewal. Other schools are developing similar approaches by working in collaborative networks with a strong emphasis on community partnership.

The network grew out of a recent leading edge seminar at NCSL⁷ (November 03) which challenged participants to look beyond school improvement to community transformation. Participants explored the models of leadership that would be required of school leaders operating in a more interdependent, partnership oriented manner where the key focus was on the needs of the child rather than the needs of any one single institution or agency. It also explored the changes in practice that would be needed to create an interdependent system which valued and promoted higher educational standards with greater well-being for children and families. John West Burnham, speaking at this seminar said:

“School improvement leads to bonding, introspection and detachment. While this creates institutional integrity, it compromises engagement and networking – the basis of the creation of social capital. If academic standards are to be raised in a sustainable way and broader educational aspirations achieved then educationists will have to see their role in terms of creating social capital rather than just improving classroom practice.”⁸

⁴ Powers et al., 2002, p.26

⁵ Every Child Matters (2003) Green Per, Cm.5860. London: The Stationery Office (TSO)

⁶ Every Child Matters – next steps, (March 2004) DfES

⁷ see www.ncsl.org.uk for more information about the leading edge seminar series

⁸ see also John West-Burnham and George Otero, IARTV seminar series August 2004

2. COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP NETWORK – CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The network currently comprises 10 areas (rural and urban). Following an initial residential event in March 2004 the network assessed the challenges and opportunities that would shape its work in the coming 18 months in terms of the following questions.

- What would a system which was configured to work interdependently to deliver better outcomes for children look like?
- What sort of forms of facilitation and ways of working do we need to develop to ensure that everyone in the network has a voice – how do we model community leadership in action?
- The system is powerful – it reverts to type; how do we ensure that we stay dynamic and open to new ways of working?
- How do we balance the tension between creating an organic people and child focused network whilst creating robust systems for support and delivery within and between organisations?

2.1. Networking – exchange of ideas and services

One of the discussions considered how ideas and services can be exchanged within a multi-organisational network. Those involved wanted to move from simply sharing resources to exchanging thinking and ideas through to a collaborative sharing of purpose and a challenging of the status quo and of each other. The network agreed that true networked learning has taken place when all contributors to the network are changed as a result. As one participant remarked:

“I don’t think I have ever been in a network where real networked learning took place and led to systemic change, but this is essential for the development of authentic community leadership and school/community transformation.”

2.2. Networking and the building of social capital

Members of the network also shared their understanding of social capital⁹. They used the following check list as a useful way of gaining clarity on both the core purpose of the Community Leadership Network and also of assessing the development and impact of social capital over time.

- A strong sense of shared values and social aspirations
- A shared sense of social/geographical identity
- Levels of trust, interdependence and sharing
- Collaborative action across the network and between agencies and organisations
- Levels of volunteering and social engagement across the community network
- Participation in faith based activities
- Turnout in elections
- Cooperation on economic and social projects

⁹ “The theory of social capital is, at heart, most straightforward. Its central thesis can be summed up in two words: relationships matter. By making connections with one another, and keeping them going over time, people are able to work together to achieve things that they either could not achieve by themselves, or could only achieve with great difficulty.” Field (2003)

- A sense of control and investment in the future

There is a strong and interdependent relationship between building social capital and developing community leadership. By working collaboratively communities achieve more than they could do as individuals; and the process of working together builds the relationships, connections and social capital within the community. *“Social capital is essentially about networks, trust, engagement, communication, shared values, aspirations and interconnectedness.”*¹⁰ Community leadership is, however, more than building social capital – community leadership includes discussion about how action is initiated, and an emphasis on distributing and enhancing the leadership capacity of those within the many different agencies which serve the community, as well as those living and working within the wider community. In the words of Burns and Taylor, *“in order to achieve genuine community participation, there has to be organisational development within the partner institutions as well as capacity building within communities.”* (2000)

3. THE NATIONAL COLLEGE FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP STRATEGY

3.1. What is community leadership?

NCSL has a working model that defines community leadership as:

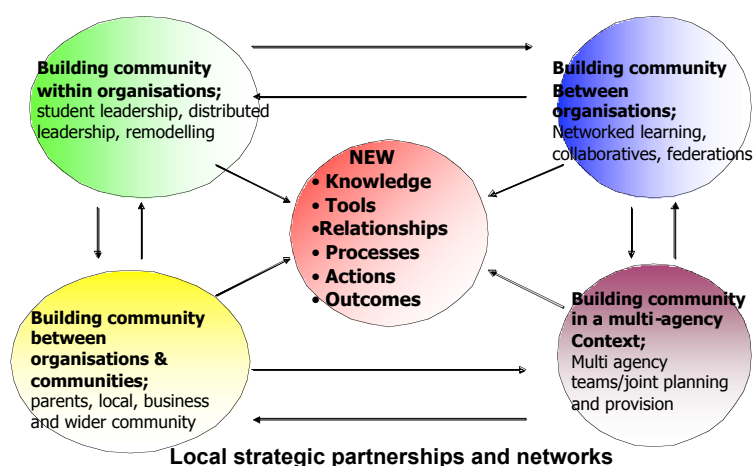
Leadership of **place** – geographical and interest led, not organisational

Leadership of **purpose** – child, family and community outcome focused

Leadership of **style** – in partnership, distributed, not vested in an individual

The community leadership strategy works within four domains that interconnect to build community leadership. NCSL is beginning to populate this framework with examples of interesting practice that others can learn from and is supporting its development through a change process which connects all 4 areas.

NCSL Community Leadership Strategy



¹⁰ John West-Burnham and George Otero (2004) p.5 of Educational Leadership and Social Capital

NCSL has characterised community leadership as leadership which engages people to make something mutually beneficial happen. It involves those aspects of leadership which help people to grow, develop relationships, enhance listening and communication and facilitate team work and participation. It mobilises and connects people, communities and organisations to achieve better outcomes for children, young people and families.

In this paper we will use the case study of Winsford Networked Learning Community to understand what leadership of place, leadership of purpose and leadership of style can look like in practice. As a Networked Learning Community Winsford have already spent some time building community within and between organisations. Through this case study we outline some of the facilitation tools which are beginning to support the building of community between organisations and the community and within a multi-agency context.

4. COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP – CASE STUDY WINSFORD NETWORKED LEARNING COMMUNITY

4.1. Winsford background

One of the Community Leadership Network areas is Winsford - a small town (population 37,000) in Cheshire (north-west England). Winsford was transformed in the 1960s and 1970s as a result of the then Government's 'overspill' programme. New housing estates were built to accommodate residents of inner city clearance areas in Manchester and Liverpool. Whilst the large scale local authority estates were built, a change in Government policy meant that much of the supporting social and community infrastructure was not completed. The socio-economic situation for Winsford is reflected in the data below:

- ✓ 25% of Winsford's population is aged under 16 (compared with 20% nationally)
- ✓ 44% of Winsford's children live in low-income households (27% nationally)
- ✓ Over 60% of Winsford's workforce has no / low level qualifications (national rate is 50%)
- ✓ 30% of the workforces are engaged in routine / semi-routine occupations (national rate is 21%)

Indicators of deprivation published in 2004 using new geographical areas, make national comparisons more telling. 5 out of 20 reporting areas in Winsford are in the most deprived 20% in the country. And 7 out of the 20 Winsford areas are in the poorest 20% nationally when it comes to adult skills. This is matched by 7 of Winsford's areas, largely the same ones, showing employment deprivation in the worst 20%. Winsford's St Johns area is amongst the most deprived 1% in the country when it comes to education and skills.

By contrast, Winsford has no areas in the worst 20% when it comes to crime, housing and homelessness, and the outdoor environment. However the relationship between education, skills and unemployment becomes translated into patterns of income and lifestyle which have long-term effects. Nine of Winsford's 20 areas are in the most health-deprived 20% nationally. In Winsford, premature deaths from circulatory disease are 35% above those which may be expected nationally. This is a cycle of deprivation which needs to be addressed.

4.2. Winsford Networked Learning Community

Winsford is a current Networked Learning Community¹¹ (NLC) that is made up of all the 17 schools in the town (2 secondary with a shared 6th form, 2 special schools, 1 shared 6th form, 9 primary, 2 junior and 2 infant schools). We began working collaboratively in 2000 as the Winsford Education Partnership when already part of a SRB (Single Regeneration Budget) project which aimed to improve basic skills across the town. The schools now wish to extend and redevelop the network so that it has more of a community focus. As has been the case nationally, results at the end of primary and secondary schools are beginning to plateau and educational improvements are becoming increasingly difficult to secure because *“social factors are disproportionately significant in their impact on children’s academic achievement.”* (West-Burnham and Otero, 2004, p.3) One of the key aims of the network is to develop a virtual extended school model for Winsford *‘a virtual one stop shop, open all hours, very inclusive and responding to different needs in the community’* (i.e. developing extended provision for children of all ages in distributed sites across the town¹²).

In addition all schools are part of the ‘Winsford by Choice’ initiative which aims to work towards a whole town community, putting learning spaces and places at the heart of the community and available for all. There is also a commitment to link to the neighbourhood renewal strategy in order that the needs of the most vulnerable families and local communities in the town are at the heart of the extension of the network and the development of the town-wide extended school.

4.3. Becoming a community focussed network in Winsford

The challenge for the Winsford NLC will be to move from a network which was initially focused on school and organisational improvement and the raising of educational standards to one which is much broader and aspires to community and school transformation, the building of social capital and a more holistic approach to both improving standards and achieving greater well-being for young people. Our current network bonded around a school agenda facilitating the formation of cross-school leadership groups, many of which focussed on teaching and learning issues in schools. While this school-centred agenda creates network integrity, it may compromise wider community engagement and networking – the basis of the creation of social capital. If academic standards are to be raised in a sustainable way and broader educational aspirations achieved, then we are aware that we will need to shift to a role focused more on creating social capital and asset building, rather than the inward focus on improving classroom practice.

Although we have always had an education focussed agenda, the Winsford Education Partnership has demonstrated a consistent pattern of working with community partners. Our first whole town education conference in February 2002 involved Vale Royal Borough Council, Cheshire County Council, Winsford Town Council, Government Office North West, North West Development Agency, Council of Voluntary Service, employers, residents and community groups.

Our original submission in March 2002 to become an NCSL Networked Learning Community spoke of our aim to *“extend this school to school and cross phase sharing to other agencies within the town. We acknowledge and are keen to expand our role involving ourselves as educationalists in the*

¹¹ for information on Networked Learning Communities visit www.ncsl.org.uk and follow the links to networked learning

¹² see document ‘Developing a virtual Extended School’ produced by Winsford in Spring 2004

life of the town in which we teach, sharing our skills and aspirations with others and learning from them."¹³

‘Through the School Gates’

Our post conference report “Through the School Gates”¹⁴ published in 2002 gave the following examples of aims identified by schools in Winsford for our town. Some have already been realised through involvement as a Networked Learning Community with NCSL:

- ✓ greater involvement of local businesses: initiatives, investment, sponsorship and visits from representatives to teach the children about their businesses
- ✓ sharing of expertise between schools
- ✓ town INSED (In School Educational Development Days) opportunities or other opportunities for the school representatives to meet and work together
- ✓ a more positive image and attitude in Winsford, including a reduction in crime and vandalism and a significant increase in leisure facilitation for the young people
- ✓ a greater degree of integration between the parents, schools and other agencies
- ✓ more opportunities for the education and development of parents and adults – in turn helping the child to have home environments that are supportive of education
- ✓ investment in the town centre to provide employment and entertainment opportunities
- ✓ to see the town provide meaningful employment opportunities and improved access to childcare facilities
- ✓ improvement of facilities in residential areas

Our work together over the last two years as a Networked Learning Community has meant that schools have made significant strides in developing collaborative working, learning, and sharing of best practice. Our shift towards becoming a more community focused network gained momentum when we joined the Community Leadership Network in March 2004. During the last ten months we have deployed a range of strategies to develop our understanding of community leadership and provide opportunities for school-based staff and members of our wider communities to talk and learn together to develop a common language about community leadership. By developing social capital in this way, and by supporting the evolution of our network to become more community focussed we hope that the leadership capacity built across the town will ensure sustainable transformation for the children and families of Winsford.

As an initial step to building this capacity, between August and October 2004 we commissioned trained members of our local community to undertake focus group work with local residents and other stakeholders to discuss the key concepts of ‘community’, ‘leadership’ and ‘community leadership’ and we have planned further focus group work with pupils and parents in early 2005. The initial findings from this work are presented later in the paper (see pages 10 – 11).

¹³ Winsford Education Partnership bid to become an NLC, March 2002

¹⁴ Through the School Gates – Winsford NLC report November 2002

4.4. Leadership of purpose

In November 2004, the town held its third INSED (In School Educational Development Day) with more than 450 representatives from all 17 schools, and more than 30 members of local community groups, other agencies, local councillors and local residents. At this event we provided opportunities for colleagues to share their experiences and aspirations for Winsford through a card sort activity (Appendix A) developed and adapted from research undertaken by Profs. K. Riley and K. Seashore (2004)¹⁵ we share some of the findings from this activity below (see pages 8-9). Every individual was also asked to consider what leadership roles they could take on to contribute towards the transformation of Winsford and these findings have helped to shape our plans for 'What next for Winsford' (see pages 17 and 18).

These activities have helped to widen participation and provide opportunities to develop a common language about community leadership. The quotes below are from participants at our 2004 INSED day. These indicate how we are beginning to build the leadership capacity to enable both those employed in schools and those living and working in the local communities to service and build capacity for interdependent relationships between institutions and communities beyond the school gates, moving away from a culture of competition and towards a culture of collaboration:

"They're all our children wherever they go to school"

"Need a centre where children feel comfortable – no-one's territory"

"We need to get everyone talking – not just in leadership groups, and not just teachers and parents"

"We need to focus on our pupils"

"Children must get the provision they need"

"As well as schools making time for the community – the community needs to make time for schools"

"Have stronger, not just traditional, community links which help inform decisions"

"Schools and other agencies throughout the town can work together to 'break the cycle' and lose the negative image of the town. By doing this we hope that we, as educators, can bring education back to the child where it rightfully belongs"

Participants at the 2004 INSED day also shared some success stories about how collaboration across institutions was already beginning to make a difference to children – although most of these examples are school-based because this had been the main focus of the network prior to 2004:

"For the first time our children and Hebden's [a special school] worked together and they really found out a lot about each other. They were all children"

"working together brings out ideas you may not have thought of"

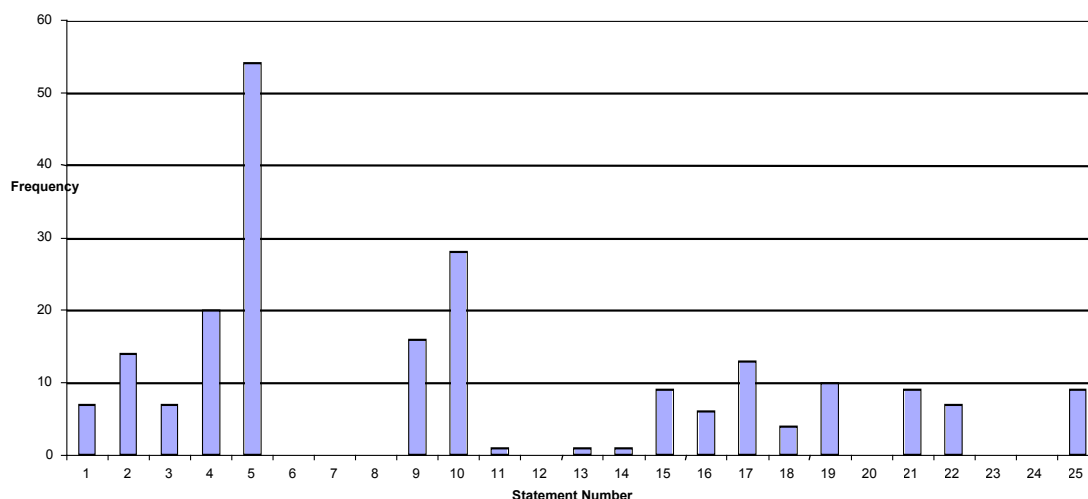
"The Arts Festival was a brilliant advertisement for Winsford"

The graph below (fig 1a) show that there was one overwhelming reason why participants believed that schools and communities should be more closely linked and this was *that 'children's self esteem will be improved and aspirations can be raised'*. This compelling reason to work and learn together did not originate from the literature review, rather it comes from Winsford's own analysis of needs and aspirations initially undertaken at our 'Through the School Gates' INSED day in November

¹⁵ Profs. K. Riley and K. Seashore, July 2004 Exploring New Forms Of Community Leadership: Linking Schools & Communities to Improve Educational Opportunities for Young People

2002. Agreeing a reason to work together is important because research about networks indicates that having a compelling reason, a moral purpose around which to unite, is critical for the successful development of the network¹⁶:

Figure 1a. Popularity of the statements placed in the top 3 by every group



Statement no.5 was most popular: *Schools and communities should be more closely linked so that children's self esteem will be improved and aspirations can be raised.*

Those at the event on 1st November 2004 clearly believe that schools and communities in Winsford should be more closely linked so that children's self esteem will be improved and aspirations can be raised. This is an important starting point for all in Winsford and it is interesting just how popular this statement was. To ensure that community groups and other non-educational institutions are not missed out from this research, community representatives who attended this INSED day are in the process of undertaking this card sort activity within their own organisations and there is ongoing consultation with local residents' groups and children.

4.5. What is community leadership? - seeking a definition in Winsford

As we explored our own ideas about community leadership we quickly became aware that the very words 'community' and 'leadership' mean different things to different people. So, we began by starting conversations about these terms with others, seeking a definition. We also wanted to learn how local residents defined their community, and perhaps find out what their aspirations and ambitions were for themselves, for their families and for their town. With the help of a group of residents trained in focus group techniques we staged a number of focus groups which we hoped would provide the base line for our work. Also, in January 2005 we hope to work with small groups of 8 pupils in each school exploring the concepts of community and leadership; asking them what matters to them, who plays a part in their lives, who they listen to and who listens to them, who they see as leaders and what they think leaders do.

¹⁶ David Jackson, (2004) "Networked Learning Communities: Characteristics of 'networked learning' – what are we learning?"

The focus group work¹⁷ with our residents' groups has been most illuminating, helping us to understand the concepts of 'community', 'leadership' and 'community leadership' in ways that we had not even considered. It is interesting to note that for those who participated, the concept of 'community' could bring people together (crossing boundaries) as well as defining and reinforcing the boundaries:

What community means?

- Neighbours and friends keeping an eye on things.
- Being part of a group implying an element of choice.
- Pulling together – looking after the old folk, encouraging young people.
- Having a community centre, groups to join, feeling involved.
- The area – estates, quite local.

What defines a community?

- People having responsibilities as well as rights, there are rules in a community, a sense of trust.
- People taking an interest – councillors and neighbours creating a sense of being looked after.
- Geography.
- Diversity of people (transient people, young and elderly,) different needs but a common focus.
- Churches and schools should get more out of the community.
- Policing needs to be improved, security is important.
- How people work together – co-operation.
- 'Communication makes a better community'.
- Facilities such as shops and meeting places with activities for everyone.
- Pubs with strong landlords

Furthermore, their views about leadership were not as traditional as we had anticipated:

How do you recognise a leader?

- Quick to listen but slow to talk.
- Doesn't always have to lead from the front.
- They capture the thoughts/ aspirations of a group, harnessing the energy to make things happen.
- Team players.
- A good communicator.
- Someone who you respect – they need help to lead.
- Someone representative of the community.
- Will be a focal point of the community.

¹⁷ For a full copy of the focus group report see Appendix B

It was also interesting to find out how members of the community thought they could influence schools and other institutions, and what they felt schools could do to more effectively cross the boundaries into their local communities.

How can you influence schools and other intuitions within Winsford?

- You can't influence any of these and if you try they don't listen.
- You can try by telling them your ideas.
- Churches and schools were seen as more open to ideas and change than other institutions.
- I can't influence the number of card shops in Winsford or the fact that there are no baby or men's clothes shops.

What could schools do to develop their role in the community?

- Put on more festivals/ plays.
- Employ more local teachers.
- Ensure parents send their children to school.
- Look at their costs for hiring to local groups – too expensive.
- Encourage cycling proficiency and use local volunteers.
- Tackle litter problems.
- Look at ways to encourage respect and to change behaviours in different ways.
- Leave us alone (from the children)

5. LEADERSHIP OF PLACE: BUILDING DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP CAPACITY IN SCHOOLS: STEP 1

The residents' focus groups have provided interesting insights into perspectives of 'community', 'leadership' and what 'community leadership' might be. This enquiry has also begun to utilise the skills of leaders within the community (the residents who undertook the research) and it has begun the identification and involvement of potential leaders from within our local communities. As the co-leaders of Winsford Networked Learning Community, our intention since the bidding stage was always to develop 'distributed leadership'¹⁸ both within schools and across the network rather than relying on more traditional forms of leadership which may not translate to leading across institutional boundaries.

In our submission to NCSL, written in March 2002, we stated:

*"The Partnership is committed to involving all who have a role in education in the development of leadership for learning believing that widespread ownership is the key to success."*¹⁹

Initially the network was established with a small group of 3 co-leaders who became the driving force for the network, doing most of the 'leg-work' including producing the necessary documentation, convening and planning meetings and communicating with others to develop shared knowledge and understanding. Each of the 3 co-leaders represents a different sector of the community - one serving head teacher, one retired head-teacher who is also a governor and a local resident. The third co-leader was the mayor of the town in 2003-4 and at the start of the project was employed by

¹⁸ see NCSLs Distributed Leadership website [www. http://www.ncsl.org.uk/index.cfm?pageID=randd-activities-distributed-leadership](http://www.ncsl.org.uk/index.cfm?pageID=randd-activities-distributed-leadership)

¹⁹ p.5. of the Winsford Education Partnership bid to become a NLC, March 2002

Vale Royal Council for Voluntary Service. She chairs the local Sure Start and the SRB (Single Regeneration Budget) partnership so has good working relationships with the different agencies and local residents' groups across the town. We have continued to work together over the last two and a half years, developing strong bonds and a close working relationship, relying on the different skills, knowledge and experience of one another.

In the first year, the 3 co-leaders were supported by a steering group which continues to be chaired by one of our two County Councillors, and includes 3 other head teachers. Unlike many other Networked Learning Communities we, as co-leaders, did not decide on a pupil learning focus for our network. We decided that in order to develop ownership and understanding, the focus for learning and activity had to come from the bottom up. So, we established 6 inter-school Leadership Groups (leadership teams to grow distributed leadership capacity) which would be open to staff from across all schools in the town. Each group would be able to decide the focus and direction for their own work and enquiry provided that their overall aim was to improve outcomes for pupils.

Within 18 months the leadership groups had become so successful in facilitating the sharing of good practice and the development of leadership capacity within schools, that many others within the network began to ask for leadership groups to meet their own needs. By September 2004, fourteen leadership groups were in operation and three more are planned including one for governors from across the town. In this way we are establishing learning, and learning about leadership at all levels within our schools.

We have tried to develop ownership and distributed leadership across our network through using the following frame of reference:

1. BELONGING

Nurturing

Cultural architecture

Developing the infra-structure

- Grass Roots Engagement

2. TALKING

Supporting relationships

Building trust & confidence

Raising self-esteem

Engaging in professional dialogue – pedagogy

- Creating a mutual responsibility for learning and development

3. THINKING

Creating the right conditions

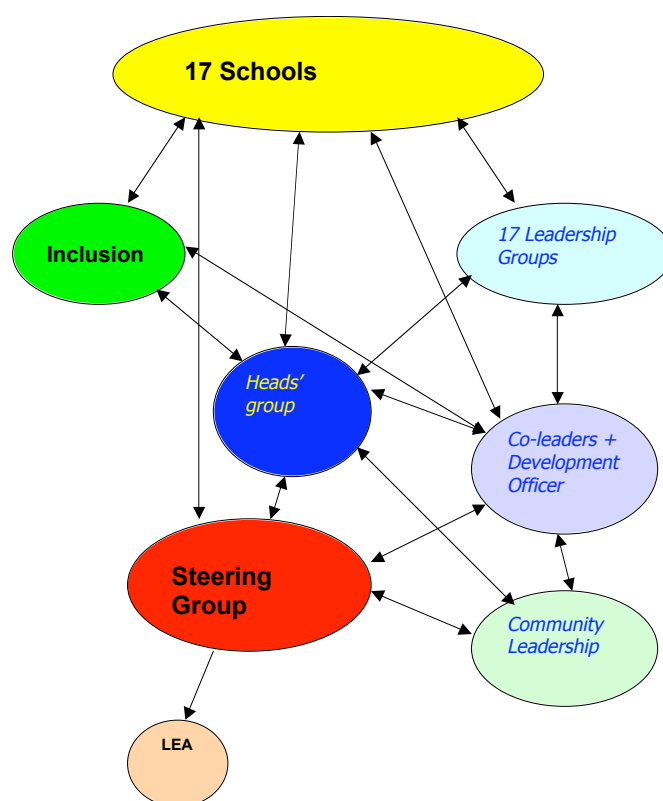
Facilitating training & development

Engaging in debate

Questioning and challenging

➤ Learning

However, as we have developed leadership capacity within schools across our network, we have also had to re-configure the structures which support our network. Not only have we established many more leadership groups than was initially intended, but our community leadership work has also dramatically increased the number of other agencies and partners with whom we need to communicate and collaborate. The network is too complex to include all the details within the network-o-gram below:



6. BUILDING DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP CAPACITY ACROSS INSTITUTIONS AND COMMUNITIES: STEP 2

We have found that building distributed leadership across institutions and within communities beyond the school gates is much more complex than building distributed leadership within schools. Within our diverse network of different organisations and communities, difficulties and confusion arise because there is no single institution or leader who is responsible for distributing the leadership roles and responsibilities across the network (as would be the case in a single school). Even our co-leadership of the network only assumes responsibility for leadership roles which head teachers within Winsford have agreed within the parameters of our structures, thus reinforcing the school-centred role for the network. ‘Taking on’ leadership roles when partnership relationships between institutions and individuals could be damaged by such actions means community leadership is a very risky concept to

put into practice – particularly when there is not an established structure within which the community leadership tasks, which cross so many boundaries, could be allocated.

For community leadership to function effectively, we need to agree formal inclusive structures based on shared and explicit values which support and facilitate the partnership working between institutions and communities, and between professionals and non-professionals to meet the needs of children and families. To facilitate this cross-institutional working we need time for ‘forming’ and ‘storming’ before we can create the structures and working practices which support the ‘norming’ and ‘performing’ phases²⁰. The activities we have been involved in since March 2004 have aimed to build ownership, understanding and a shared language with the ultimate aim of increasing leadership capacity across institutions. As we would expect, these activities have brought to the surface some issues and areas of concern about developing community leadership for practitioners in schools, as well as for the leaders of the schools and other organisations, in addition to ourselves as co-leaders of the network.

Practitioners in schools have widely varying views from “*I don’t know why I’m here*” to “*I wish I’d been more involved before today*,”²¹ indicating concerns about the lack of clarity around their role/place within the community leadership initiative.

Key people in leadership positions in schools and organisations across Winsford express other concerns about developing ownership, uncertainty about the core purpose of the activity and practical issues about managing expectations and reality:

“We need to increase the breadth of who is involved so we are not just talking to each other”

“It’s good that there are so many people focussing on outcomes – will this project improve the quality of life for children and young people in Winsford? What difference will this project make?”

“Can we manage the aspirations and the reality?”

*“There will be a ‘snowball’ effect which we need to manage – as more people and ideas come on board, how will we keep the focus and ensure the work is achievable?”*²²

As network co-leaders we share some of the above concerns but also have additional worries:

*“It is perhaps inevitable that the demands of launching and running our Networked Learning Community have meant that for the past 18 months we have not been able to realise some of those early aspirations. The invitation to develop proposals to explore and develop the concept of Community Leadership has given us the opportunity to look not just at where we are, but to look back at our original vision, and onward to where we might aspire to be...We wanted to ensure that what we proposed would not weaken the existing Partnership. We also needed to be confident that our existing as well as potential partners were willing to stay with us as we move into fresh areas of work.”*²³

*“We have identified a risk that the current education partnership could be weakened as the new community leadership project develops. Our own review also identified some areas where there was room for a fresh approach, and improved communication throughout the network. We had also underestimated the time commitment needed to achieve some of our original aims. We therefore recommended to the last Headteachers’ Leadership Group that an additional co-leader be recruited.”*²⁴

²⁰ Bruce Tuckman’s 1965 model of team development.

²¹ quotes from participants at the 1st November 2004 INSED day

²² from minutes of the first meeting about developing community leadership which took place on 14th Jan 2004

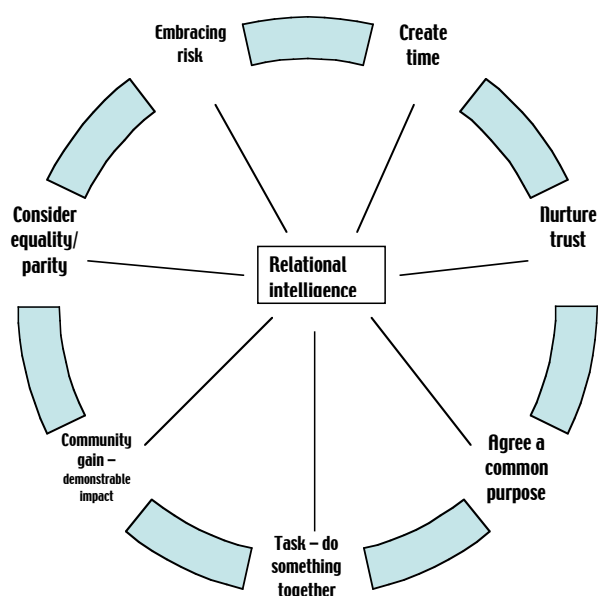
²³ from Winsford by Choice, written Summer 2004

²⁴ from advert for a new co-leader, summer term 2004

7. LEADERSHIP OF STYLE: LESSONS ABOUT LEADERSHIP

So, what have we learnt over the last 10 months about the leadership required to begin to develop community leadership within Winsford? As a key aspect of our work is developing social capital, relational intelligence is vital. The diagram below indicates some of the key elements we believe are required to develop community leadership. It is only when a sufficient level of social capital and trust are created that leaders from different parts of the community and from different institutions will be able to begin to consider the structures which could support this work in the longer term.

Key elements for developing community leadership



Furthermore, by placing relational intelligence at the heart of what leaders need to do, we acknowledge the importance of viewing the network as an organism rather than as an organisation, in which the perceptions, views, opinions and feelings of individuals are of paramount importance to develop relationships within and beyond the school gates. And for this to take place, we must all engage in a 'far-reaching process of evolution'. This is increasingly true in the world of education where we must focus much more on the needs of the children within the context of their communities, as in business where leaders must focus on the needs of the client/customer.

"the more radical the innovation, the more deeply and broadly must other players, especially customers, be involved. This places a premium on learning to manage a very wide community or network of organisations, in which all the players share a vision about how to make the innovation happen. Indeed, the major factor today limiting the spread of realized innovation is not a lack of good

ideas, technology, or capital. It is the inability to command cooperation across broad, diverse communities of players who must become intimate parts of a far-reaching process of co evolution."²⁵

The personal skills of leaders are now extremely important, because not only do those undertaking leadership roles need to demonstrate relational intelligence, they also need the capacity across the network to build the relational intelligence of others with distributed leadership roles. Some of the personal skills needed by those who undertake leadership roles include the following:

- ✓ altruistic – committed to a common moral purpose – serving the community to which they belong
- ✓ inspirational and motivational
- ✓ passionate and compassionate
- ✓ committed and persistent
- ✓ a dreamer of dreams
- ✓ an excellent communicator (listening as well as speaking)
- ✓ surrendering/taking on board other perspectives
- ✓ acts with integrity
- ✓ believes in others
- ✓ able to recognise and develop potential
- ✓ values others
- ✓ able to work as a team player – ability to be a follower
- ✓ entrepreneurial

Finally perhaps the major conclusion we have reached so far is that the development of community leadership capacity takes much greater time and resources than anyone of us envisaged. It takes time to develop relationships, to develop trust, to learn to listen to others with very different viewpoints, not to presume that we have the answers - or even that our answers will be acceptable! However despite the commitment and time required to build community leadership capacity beyond the school gates we really do believe the effort is worth it. Why? Because local residents, and staff in schools and other agencies are buzzing with energy, excitement and enthusiasm. They feel, perhaps for the first time, that they are involved in something that really will make an impact that's wider than their own family or school, *"it really feels different - we're in at the start, not being brought in part way through after things have gone wrong"* (quote from local resident). This project gives us the chance to work with the wider community to develop a model that will enable services to be designed and delivered in a very different way.

8. WHAT NEXT FOR WINSFORD?

Engaging with the concept of 'community leadership' has been an incredibly rewarding experience so far. We have built the leadership capacity within the network from a core of 8 leaders in

²⁵ p.61 *The Death of Competition – Leadership and Strategy in the Age of Business Ecosystems* – James F. Moore HarperCollins Publishers, 1997

September 2002, to a widening group of 80 adults engaged in leadership learning activities across our schools and beyond the school gates.

"It's been the most powerful learning experience I've had as a head teacher, challenging my understandings of what community leadership is...My self perception as a community leader has been transformed as I now recognise that my part in leading a community is as a member of a team of leaders who work collaboratively to serve a community."
(quote from co-leader)

We are still only at the beginning of our journey to build community leadership capacity across Winsford. Our joint activities on 1st November 2004 enabled 480 adults across Winsford to begin to consider how they could each take on leadership roles to support the transformation of our town (see Appendix C: My role in the transformation of Winsford). The following responses indicate the different kinds of boundary crossing community leadership roles many school-based colleagues in Winsford envisage undertaking.

1. Improve and encourage links/relationships between school and the community
2. *"breaking down barriers"*
3. *"take school to community and community to school"*
4. Improve pupil attitude towards learning
5. Increase involvement of parents/families in education
6. *"encourage parents into the school and get parents involved in their child's education"*
7. *"involve whole families so that the importance of education is emphasised at home"*
8. Develop inclusion in Winsford Schools
9. *"develop co-operative work between pupils with disabilities and mainstream pupils"*
10. *"work together and not in competition with other schools"*
11. Work in partnership with other teachers and professionals
12. *"work as part of a team"*
13. *"share resources, ideas and classroom practice"*
14. Obtain adequate financial resources to support/fund improvements in school

All those involved in this visioning activity were also able to anticipate the problems which may get in the way of building community leadership capacity. Furthermore, these nascent community leaders were also beginning to problem-solve how they could overcome these barriers and cross boundaries beyond their school gates.

Anticipated barriers	Suggested solutions
lack of time	allocate time normally used for paperwork
long standing prejudice, ignorance and fear	hold open days in school - invite parents and the community to work alongside pupils
lack of interest and belief in the project from the community	develop relationships and trust through informal situations

parents/staff/pupils/community members did not like change	hold workshops for parents
own confidence - going in to the unknown	share ideas and resources and successes, find ways to involve everybody at their own level and in their own way
breaking down existing barriers between establishments	keep pupils/parents/community/staff informed at all stages and make them part of the decision making process
convincing parents this would be good for children, parents and the community	provide courses for whole families to attend
schools being prepared to work together	rotate staff throughout the Winsford schools

There is much still to be done. *“today is the start of a conversation – not the end.”* We intend to bring the participants in the original focus groups back together to share our work thus far seek to develop a working definition of community leadership. We also want to map those networks and partnerships already operating across our town. We hope our pilot project in the most deprived area of Winsford will enable us to gain a greater understanding of community leadership in action. Participants include staff from the three primary schools, from agencies whose work impacts upon the lives of our children, and residents. In addition, our partnership has very recently been awarded £20k to develop an innovative project on inclusion which is “to trial a system for developing relationships and shared understanding between the Winsford schools and other agencies to provide a ‘rapid response’ to meet children’s individual needs”. This project is aimed at meeting the needs of children at risk of exclusion and their families by providing a co-ordinated and rapid response. This work will build on our community leadership work and will help to find ways to make a real difference to children and their families.

8. CONCLUSIONS

“It’s not credible for schools in isolation to try to develop community leadership; only by everyone involved taking off their labels and working together can we achieve a truly honest model.” (quote from co-leader)

It is clear from this study to date that the concept of ‘networked learning communities’ has much to offer the development of community leadership in localities. However, as the Winsford case study implies, moving from a school and classroom focused network largely centred on the education domain, into the wider and more broadly focused community and multi agency domain is not always straight forward. *“We have experienced a paradigm shift in our thinking and understanding. We now have a concept of leadership that reverses the premise of ‘a school and its community’ to a ‘community and its school’.”* (quote from co-leader)

However, the focus on leadership place, purpose and style has provided a structure through which to engage people and unite around a common purpose. This has reinforced the difference between community leadership and community partnership in Winsford, *“Community leadership is different to partnership work because of commonality around purpose and language, agreed values and vision and the centrality of the community as the purpose of leadership”* (quote from co-leader). Possibly the most powerful learning for other networks who wish to do similar work is the recommitment in Winsford to distributed leadership and the focus they are placing on ‘relational leadership’.

Their future challenges to move ‘through the school gates’ will be shared by many areas doing similar work as the extension of the school day, week and year becomes a reality in England and the ‘Strengthening Community’ aspirations of the current Headteacher Standards are realised in practice. Community and school partnerships, more positive attitudes to learning, involvement of families, parents and carers, a commitment to inclusion, and creativity in seeking funding are high on the

agenda for Winsford. These are significant challenges but the community leadership network in Winsford has spent time building relationships and shared aspirations with schools and communities and is confident it will find collective solutions which will lead to a sense of shared achievement.

REFERENCES

- Burns, D. and Taylor, M. (2000). *Auditing community participation*. Bristol/York: The Policy Press/Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Edgar, D. (2001). *The Patchwork Nation*
- Every Child Matters (2003) Green Per, Cm.5860. London: The Stationery Office (TSO)
- Every Child Matters – next steps, (March 2004) DfES
- Field, J. (2003) *Social Capital*. Routledge, London
- Jackson, D. (2004). *Networked Learning Communities: Characteristics of 'networked learning' – what are we learning?*. paper prepared for the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement, 6th - 9th January 2004, Rotterdam, the Netherlands.
- Moore, J. F. (1997). *The Death of Competition – Leadership and Strategy in the Age of Business Ecosystems*. HarperCollins Publishers
- National Standards for Head teachers, published Oct 2004 by DfES
- Powers, S., Warren, S., Gilborn, D., Clark, A., Thomas, S. and Code, K. (2002) 'Education in Deprived Areas: Outcomes, Inputs and Processes', Institute of Education, London
- Riley, K. and Seashore, K. (July 2004), 'Exploring New Forms of Community Leadership: Linking Schools and Communities to Improve Educational Opportunities for Young People', NCSL
- Tuckman, B. (1965) model of team development
- West-Burnham, J., and Otero, G. (August 2004) 'Educational Leadership and Social Capital', published by IARTV Seminar Series no. 136

WINSFORD REPORTS/PAPERS:

- 'Developing a Virtual Extended School' (Spring 2004), Winsford NCL
- "Evaluation report from the Winsford NCL 1st November 2004 INSED day", (November 2004) Winsford NCL
- "Minutes of the first meeting about developing community leadership which took place on 14th Jan 2004"
- "Notes from meeting on 11 May 2004 with co-leaders of network"
- "Through the School Gates" Winsford NCL report (March 2002), Winsford NCL
- "Winsford by Choice", written Summer 2004
- "Winsford Education Partnership bid to become an NCL", (March 2002), Winsford NCL
- "Winsford Community Leadership Focus Group Report", (November 2004), Winsford NCL
- Winsford NCL advert for a new co-leader, summer term 2004

USEFUL WEBSITES:

- <http://www.businessballs.com/tuckmanformingstormingnormingperforming.htm>
- www.ncsl.org.uk/communityleadership
- www.ncsl.org.uk/leadingedge
- www.ncsl.org.uk/ncl
- NCSLs Distributed Leadership website [www. http://www.ncsl.org.uk/index.cfm?pageID=randd-activities-distributed-leadership](http://www.ncsl.org.uk/index.cfm?pageID=randd-activities-distributed-leadership)

APPENDIX A:**LIST OF CARD SORT STATEMENTS – FROM RESEARCH BY PROFS. K. RILEY AND K. SEASHORE, JULY 2004**

This activity was adapted from a comprehensive literature review and accompanying research which was undertaken by Profs. Riley and Seashore²⁶. 20 statements about why schools and communities should be more closely linked were combined with 5 statements from Winsford's 2002 INSED day (the 5 additional statements chosen from the 2002 Winsford INSED day are listed in italics).

Focus	Theme	Card Sort Statements
Student achievement	Improving student achievement	1. ...children learn to become more responsible adults. 2. ...teachers understand more about where children come from and what motivates children. 3. ...the curriculum will be more relevant for pupils. 4. ...teachers and parents can work together more closely and help pupils to achieve. 5. <i>...children's self esteem will be improved and aspirations can be raised.</i>
Schools as agencies for democracy	Making schools more accountable and increasing democratic involvement	6... schools will be accountable to their local community. 7. ...local people can have more of a say in important decisions about their schools 8. ...they can come together to plan for what they want for children. 9. young people have more opportunities to be involved in decisions about their lives 10..children have a sense of belonging in their community.
Building social capital	Building social capital within communities, by encouraging schools to collaborate to promote community well-being (e.g. healthier or safer communities)	11. ...vandalism and anti-social behaviour among young people is reduced. 12....the local area is safer, healthier and more attractive 13. ...adults as well as children are encouraged to learn together. 14. ...parents will feel included in their child's education. 15. <i>...by working together we can celebrate success through shared events.</i> 16. <i>...facilities and expertise can be shared, and the community can access school facilities.</i> 17. <i>...increased opportunities for life long learning, the town can provide meaningful employment and training opportunities and improved access to childcare.</i>
Moral basis for society	Developing the role of schools as moral agents, promoting social justice and responsibility for youth	18. ...they can work together to tackle racism and other forms of discrimination. 19. ...business, education, faith and community leaders and parents will have more chances to work together for the benefit of young people. 20. ...schools can do more to prepare new immigrant groups to take part in society. 21. <i>...they can agree on fundamental values.</i>
School self-interest	Promoting schools' self-interest through the development of good public relations	22. ...discipline and behaviour within schools is improved. 23. ...schools will employ more people who understood the local community. 24. ...people will have more information that could help them chose a school. 25. <i>... we can promote a more positive image of Winsford</i>

²⁶ Profs. K. Riley and K. Seashore, July 2004 Exploring New Forms Of Community Leadership: Linking Schools & Communities to Improve Educational Opportunities for Young People.

Student achievement	Improving student achievement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ...children learn to become more responsible adults. 2. ...teachers understand more about where children come from and what motivates children. 3. ...the curriculum will be more relevant for pupils. 4. ...teachers and parents can work together more closely and help pupils to achieve. 5. <i>...children's self esteem will be improved and aspirations can be raised.</i>
Schools as agencies for democracy	Making schools more accountable and increasing democratic involvement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6... schools will be accountable to their local community. 7. ...local people can have more of a say in important decisions about their schools 8. ...they can come together to plan for what they want for children. 9. young people have more opportunities to be involved in decisions about their lives 10..children have a sense of belonging in their community.

APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP FOCUS GROUPS

This initial draft report covers the work of 7 focus groups consisting of 51 participants held between 27th August and 21st October 2004. This included 1 Stakeholders Group²⁷, 1 Business Group, 1 Education (Headteachers and school leaders) and 4 groups of residents. The majority of participants in the residents' groups have lived in Winsford for most of their lives. All were asked the same questions, their responses are summarised as follows:

What community means?

- Neighbours and friends keeping an eye on things.
- Being part of a group implying an element of choice.
- Pulling together – looking after the old folk encouraging young people.
- Having a community centre, groups to join, feeling involved.
- The area – estates, quite local.

What defines a community?

- People having responsibilities as well as rights, there are rules in a community, a sense of trust.
- People taking an interest – councillors and neighbours creating a sense of being looked after.
- The balance between business and social communities – good jobs are essential.
- Geography.
- Diversity of people (transient people, young and elderly,) different needs but a common focus.
- Churches and schools should get more out of the community.
- Policing needs to be improved, security is important.
- How people work together – co-operation.

²⁷ Stakeholders group included representatives from: Connexions; Job Centre Plus; Health (Primary Care Trust) Business Leader; Social Services; Community Safety Partnership; Mayor of Winsford Town Council; Voluntary Sector.

- 'Communication makes a better community'.
- Facilities such as shops and meeting places with activities for everyone.
- Pubs with strong landlords.

How do you recognise a leader?

- Bold, responsible, encouraging, appreciative, enthusiastic, realistic, supportive, honest, loyal, dedicated.
- Quick to listen but slow to talk.
- Doesn't always have to lead from the front.
- They will capture the thoughts and aspirations of a group and harness the energy to make things happen.
- Team players.
- A good communicator.
- Someone who you respect – they need help to lead.
- Someone representative of the community.
- Someone willing to go the extra step.
- Someone with vision.
- Will be a focal point of the community.

Can you identify any strong leaders?

Seven strong leaders were listed

Who do you see as unsuccessful leaders?

Four unsuccessful leaders were listed

What qualities do good and unsuccessful leaders share?

All leaders irrespective of whether or not they are seen as successful were acknowledged as:

- trying to help
- having a sense of authority
- trying to make a point
- having good and bad points
- toeing the party line
- all having supporters and admirers
- having strongly held beliefs

How do you identify unsuccessful leaders?

- Being untrustworthy – going back on promises and not following through to their full conclusions.
- Vanity.
- Reactive rather than proactive.

- Being disengaged from the community.

- Not listening to everyone's views.

How does a community identify its leaders?

- People who are trusted.
- People who have built up a good reputation over the years.
- Appear as natural leaders through their deeds and presentation.
- They are the problem solvers
- Someone who sticks to their promises and knows their limitations.
- Someone who delivers benefit to and gains respect from the community.

Institutions within Winsford - Do they provide leadership within the community?

Churches and schools were seen as providing leadership in the past through the role they played in the community. It was felt that this is no longer the case, though many involved in the focus groups stated the importance of the church to their own lives.

Bank managers were also cited as a once powerful force in the local community that now have no influence or leadership.

Local councillors were felt to be good but not the councils on which they served.

The role of teachers in the wider community is confused.

Do they provide leadership within their own institution?

Schools were seen as providing internal leadership.

The PTA was seen as influential inside and out of the school grounds.

Other leadership (within other institutions) also looked after internal leadership.

How can you influence them?

- You can't influence any of these and if you try they don't listen.
- You can try by telling them your ideas.
- Churches and schools were seen as more open to ideas and change than other institutions.
- I can't influence the number of card shops in Winsford or the fact that there are no baby or men's clothes shops.

What could schools do to develop their role in the community?

- Put on more festivals/ plays.
- Employ more local teachers.
- Ensure parents send their children to school.
- Look at their costs for hiring to local groups – too expensive.
- Encourage cycling proficiency and use local volunteers.
- Tackle litter problems.

- Look at ways to encourage respect and to change behaviours in different ways.
- Leave us alone (from the children)

APPENDIX C: MY ROLE IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF WINSFORD

Scenario – it's 2009 and although you didn't expect it, **you** were singled out in the awards ceremony for the role you played in helping transform Winsford. What did you do that caught the attention of the National Award Team?

A journalist from a local paper has come to interview you about the contribution you made to the Schools-Community Transformation Award which Winsford has just won. The journalist is very impressed with the transformation which has taken place in Winsford – schools, other services and the community are now working and learning together for the benefit of children and families; traditional barriers have been broken down; achievement levels have improved dramatically for everyone across Winsford.

You will now have a few minutes quiet reflection time to consider the role you played in the transformation of Winsford – make some notes to help you when you answer these questions in a trio later.

- Qu. 1. What was your role in November 2004, when this work really began to transform Winsford?
- Qu. 2. What did you have to do to make Winsford a success?
- Qu. 3. Can you look back to the early days of this work – what was the most important first step that you took?
- Qu. 4. What was the biggest barrier that you overcame?
- Qu. 5. How did you do this?